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A Message from the Smiths

A MESSAGE FROM THE SMITHS

OR

TEACHING IN THE GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS OF JAPAN

—BY—

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WITH PERSONAL LETTERS USED AS
INTRODUCTION, NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS

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PRESENTED

To the college friends of the Smiths and to others who are interested in their work.

INTRODUCTION

(A Personal Letter)

Chôfu, Nagato, Japan,
April 7, 1904.

DEAR CONARD:

We have both been writing more or less, ever since we have been here, about our work and its opportunities, but there are, just now, three or four especial reasons why we want to make this joint effort to bring the field of the government teacher in Japan before the men of the University of Illinois.

In the first place, we have been here long enough to realize the opportunities and the needs of this field. We have worked in it ourselves and feel that we are now, perhaps, better able to judge of these things than even the Association Secretaries who have the work in charge. The need of such teachers is felt all over the country, both by the missionaries and by the Japanese themselves. The very fact that the educational officials have asked the Young Men's Christian Association to furnish them with foreign teachers,

preferably Americans, shows that the lives which the Christian men live is appreciated by the Japanese, even though they themselves may not be Christians. In most cases, the officials have said that they prefer Christian men. The missionaries testify to the value of the life of a Christian layman among the students, and in some cases have even taken the positions themselves for a time in order to get a hold on the students and to hold the positions until Christian men could be secured, rather than to have the places filled by men not active in Christian work.

Just at the present time there seems to be a very pressing need for more men. Fisher, the International Y. M. C. A. Secretary who has had charge of this work, told us the other day that *six* new men were wanted before next September, some of them very soon. If the men do not come this summer, some of these positions will probably be filled by other men, whose lives will be anything but a help to the students under them, and not only not a help, but a decided hindrance to the christian work in the community.

Lastly, we feel that back at the old University of Illinois there must be some men of ability and strength to whom this work would appeal very strongly if they only knew more of it and of the *immediate* need for men. Just now men are deciding their next year's work, and we want to present this phase of it to them. Moreover, G. M. Fisher is to start for the United States on his furlough, April sixteenth, and will be within far more

easy reach than when here in Japan, and can tell much more definitely of the work than any man who has never been here.

Our hope in writing this is that it may help to bring this work before the men in such a way that some of them shall decide to take it up either immediately, or in the future, and help to supply this pressing need for more men, strong men, Christian men, that is so evident to all of us here.

The opportunities for Christian work in the government schools can hardly be overestimated. First of all, one's work is among *students;* and in Japan, even more than in America, the *students* are the men who are influencing the nation. Out of these government schools are coming the men who are taking the lead in the Japanese army and navy, in political circles and in business. And then a teacher has a prestige, not only among the students and teachers, but among all the Japanese people that few missionaries have. He comes as a teacher of English in the employ of the government, and not as a teacher of a foreign religion. The opportunity for doing direct Christian work is large. The members in Bible classes are sometimes not large*; but the men who attend are usual-

*"I have just come home from my Bible class--I had thirty-two at the class, which is about the usual number." —*From letter of November 25, 1903, from P. A. S.*

Soon after Roy began his work he had three Bible classes, one among the teachers, one among the students, and one in the Presbterian mission.

"Our men now teach the Bible in their homes to over 300 men a week."—*From letter of December 1, 1903, from Galen M. Fisher.*

ly the best students. Even though a large number of them begin the study, perhaps entirely, for the sake of the English, yet many of them soon become interested in Christianity itself, and often become active Christians.

These positions are open *now*. A man can begin the work as soon as he reaches Japan. Is there not some one ready to come?

Yours in His service,

P. A. Smith,

Roy Smith.

DETAILS IN REGARD TO THE POSITIONS OF GOVERNMENT TEACHERS IN THE SCHOOLS OF JAPAN

First, as to the work itself, primarily, of course, it is the teaching of the English language in much the same way that Latin, French, and German are taught in our American schools, except that all the teaching is done in the language taught. Conversation, Composition, and Reading are the principal subjects, though Grammar is sometimes asked for, and a good knowledge of English Grammar is absolutely essential. The range of the Composition work is from the very simplest sentences such as we begin with in our German Composition work, to the best of the samples sent with this*. There must be, in the higher circles, some acquaintance with literature and a knowledge of the technicalities of Rhetoric and Composition. There is much need also for a careful knowledge of the manner in which the sounds of the En-

*See Appendix II.

glish language are produced, as the Japanese is so meagre in its number of sounds, and those which it has are often far different from ours. The student must often be taught how to produce a sound, not simply by giving the sound yourself, but by teaching him *how* to use his tongue, lips, and throat in the proper manner.

The financial side of the question shows but few advantages or disadvantages. The expenses of getting here must be borne by the man himself, except from Yokohama to his place of work. The salaries range from $900 to $1,200 per year. The expense of living is about $40 per month, for a single man, and $80 to $90 per month for a married man. There is, therefore, no special advantage in this line, though a man can live very comfortably on the money offered. A man must also take into consideration the fact that he must be somewhat more careful here and should not run on so small a margin as at home, as he is a long way from his friends and any large financial assistance. On the other hand, one can have more conveniences, of such kinds as are obtainable, than on the same salary at home. Labor is cheap, tho not so skilled as American labor.

The religious or Christian phase of this work varies more than any other. One of the greatest features of this is the prestige which a teacher enjoys. His life before the student counts for much in teaching them that not all foreigners, who are not missionaries, are a dissolute lot. The lives of some of the worse

than heathen foreigners here do much to hinder Christianity, and the life of the Christian teacher can do much to counteract this. The principal of one school who had a foreign teacher of the wrong kind, when he got rid of him, said that he would never hire another foreign teacher unless he was a Christian.

The active or aggressive kind of work is about the same as at home,—Bible classes and personal work, with an occasional chance, in some places, to speak at men's meetings in English, or to speak at general religious meetings through an interpreter. These opportunities develop as fast as a man can take care of them, in most cases. Some of the men use interpreters in their Bible classes, and some do not, depending upon the circumstances of the individual case. The personal work is done among the men in the Bible classes*, and the men who come to the house to learn English and to find out about foreign customs. These men may be either students or teachers, if the man wishes to try both. As at home, the personal work is the most fruitful branch of the work in its direct results.†

Never let any man say that this work is not missionary work. The Christian English teacher is, in general, reaching a class of

*"Every little while a new man shows up, and wants to learn more of Christianity and wants to become a Christian. It is inspiring to think of the depths of spiritual ignorance from which these men are climbing. We teach, and talk, and God moves the hearts of the men." *From letter of January 8, 1904, from P. A. S.*

†See Appendix I.

men whom the missionary cannot reach‡, and who are to be the leading men of the coming generation. The opportunity is as large as the man can make it, for there is, in most cases, almost no restriction put upon religious teaching. The indirect influence of the teacher is the same as it is at home, except that it is larger, as the foreign teacher is a more marked man than in America.

Among the advantages to the individual may be counted the pleasure of seeing the country. Few countries in the world can boast of finer scenery than Japan, or of more interesting places to visit and see. This and the experience gained by three or four years in a foreign land might appeal to a man who does not care to devote his life to the work, or to mission work of any kind, but who is an earnest Christian. Just at present, Japan is the center of the world's interest, and the Far East is probably to be the field of action during the next generation.

The influence of such work can not but be broadening, as it gives a man a far larger conception of what sort of lives and people the big word "humanity" means. There is a certain uplift also, which comes from the reflex influence upon one's self in the uplifting of the men around him. It is greater than the same influence at home, just in the

‡"The Missionary to them is somewhat of an intruder. The government teacher is *their* teacher, and they recognize that what time he gives them outside of his regular teaching hours is voluntary and because he is interested in them." *From letter of April 12, 1904, from R. S.*

same proportion as the distance which a man must be lifted is greater than that of a man in America, who has had more or less Christian teaching all his life.

For the help of these teachers there is held every year a Summer School, somewhat like the Conference at Lake Geneva, for a week or ten days. There are three sessions a day, one of which is given to methods of teaching and two to religious work. Besides these meetings there are many opportunities for personal interviews; far more than at Lake Geneva.

In order that men may not look upon this as too much of an easy place we will enumerate a few of the disadvantages. The first is the one common to all mission work—the lack of society, and sometimes complete isolation from all except Japanese people. The number of English and American people in the cities varies from six to ten thousand in Yokohama to none at all in some places. Of course, the isolation in a place where there are a few foreigners is not hard for a man who does not crave society pleasures. He can and does make friends with the two or three or dozen missionaries, as the case may be and is very comfortable. But the man who goes to the post where he is the only foreigner in the city finds it a lonely life and a hard one.*

One of the effects upon a man's spiritual life is that of deadening. And then there is a grad-

*"It is a great privilege to be in this work. It's lonesome, at times, and a fellow gets a little blue, at times, but it's a great privilege, anyway."—*From letter of Dec. 12, 1903, from R. S.*

ual lowering of a man's ideals, because of the low ideals of the people around him, and the lack of stimulus that comes from friendship and close contact with strong high Christian characters. Moreover, he does not hear sermons or talks in his own language, and for a long time understands nothing of the Japanese preaching, if there is any which he can hear. All of these things must be manfully met and fought, or a man will find himself gradually drifting away and getting spiritually cold and dead. Of the temptations to the more heinous sins we can only say that they are strong and fierce, and a man must be prepared to meet almost anything. Japan is honey-combed with the social evil, and the teacher is not always expected to restrain himself from even the most loathsome forms of vice. Moreover, drinking to excess is common at many teachers' social affairs which he must attend. This is not always the case. In the Hiroshima Higher Normal School no drinking is ever indulged in at any meeting of teachers or students. This, however, is exceptional. In such surroundings one can realize the danger a man is in if he yields to the deadening influence spoken of before, and allows his spiritual life and ideals to weaken. Taken all in all, there is really nothing for a man to gain personally from coming out to these posts. His loss and danger will just about compensate for the experience and the gain.

You may wish to know something about who should come. First of all, certainly not a man who is not a Christian in the highest sense,--an

active, earnest Christian. The breaking down of non-Christian and of weak Christian men who are sent to these posts or elsewhere in government service or in business, under the temptations which they meet, shows the necessity of a strong Christian character in the men who come.

Again, no man who is not reasonably strong physically should come. You have, perhaps, heard the climate of Japan described as being rather debilitating. and that a person cannot do as much work here as in America. This is probably true, though we have never felt better in our lives than since we came here. A Japanese house is likely to be rather full of draughts, and to have many cracks, and, as a consequence, in the North it is hard to keep off rheumatism and similar diseases if one is inclined to them. We do not mean by this that one must be a gaint in order to stand the climate, but simply to show that a man must not come as a missionary did last year, all tired out from seminary work expecting to recuperate here, and must not come with any chronic disease expecting the climate to cure him. The missionary referred to had to return in less than six months in order to keep from losing his mind. The man of average strength and health, if careful not to overwork at first, can keep just as well as at home and need not fear.

The man who expects to stay only one year in Japan had better stay at home. The Association and the schools, also, want men who will stay at least two years, and much prefer those

who will stay there. Of course, better still is the man who expects to give his life to the work and to make a life business and a life study of it. These men will naturally have some preference over the short time men in the selection of positions.

The man who expects some day to take up mission work should not hesitate to come if the way opens. There is perhaps no better opportunity for a man to work into a mission than through one of these places. This year at least one man goes into a mission from one of these places, and others have had offers from missions and have refused because of the opportunities opened in the places where they were. This all applies with a special force to the man who wants to work in Japan; but two or three years here for a young man would not be at all bad for a Chinese or Korean missionary. We are all of us more closely in touch with the missionaries than with any other class of people here except our own students, and in all cases we work hand in hand with them in our Christian work, so the step to the mission is simply from lay to direct Christian work.

ROY SMITH,
P. A. SMITH.

Chofu, Nagato, Japan, April 7, 1904.

APPENDIX I.

(Extract from a Letter of October 11, 1903, from P. A. S.)

"Promptly at three o'clock (Sunday), my hour to begin private talks with my boys, two appeared, the same ones who were here last Sunday. One is pretty well along and ready to be instructed for baptism. We talked mostly today on Matthew 4, as he had difficulty in understanding it. Toward the last I led him on to the subject of prayer. He said he did not know really how to pray. He prayed when he found things difficult to understand, but that was all. I went over the simple foundations of prayer,—i. e. asking as we do of our earthly father, etc.,—and then we knelt and he prayed aloud and I followed. Just before they were ready to go the other man, who is just beginning to evince an interest in Christianity, said 'If I pray here, can God help my father who is at home?' That was easily answered, of course. Then came the question, 'If I die a Christian, will I see my mother who is dead and was not a Christian?' There were tears in his eyes as he asked, and I could only explain the passage about the servant who

knew his Lord's will and the one who did not. Just as they were starting, the first one said, 'I feel stronger in my heart,' and then added, 'I feel as if I am changing in some way.' May God grant that this change may be the light of the Holy Spirit breaking in on a soul that is groping for the truth. These two are only samples of many more that are struggling to know the real truth."

(Extract from Letter of February 21, 1904, from P. A. S.)

"It might be helpful for me to state some of the questions that come up to me to be answered. I can't state them all, but I will give you a few I have had lately.

Why do you believe in the Divinity of Christ?

What do you mean when you say that Christ was the Son of God?

What are the real essentials of Christianity?

Explain miracles.

Is baptism a prime necessity?

Why is it so necessary?

What do you mean by 'keeping the Sabbath'?

Where did Christ come from to earth?

Where is heaven?

Why are there sects among Christians?

When did the sects begin to spring up?

Is every word of the Bible absolutely true? If not, why not, since it is God's word?

How do we know the Gospels are true, even after we grant the existence of an historical personage named Jesus Christ?

These may give you a little idea of some of

the quesitons a man is called upon to answer. I myself, so far, have found none who needed to be taught belief in God, but many have simply a belief in one great supreme being and nothing else."

APPENDIX II.

(Composition of T. Hasegawa)

The Most Important Event in the Present War.

Our long expected Japan-Russia war broke out at last. A hot battle was fought outside Port Arthur of late. I will tell something about it.

At midnight on the eighth of February our torpedo-boats sailed secretly toward the Russian squadron lying outside Port Arthur. They came so near the enemy that they could distinguish the seamen of the enemy moving about on deck, not being seen by them. But the enemy discovered them at last, and began to fire on them. Still our plucky blue-jackets, never fearing, advanced a little farther, and discharged torpedoes at what they considered the largest of the enemy's warships. On their way home they could see several of the enemy's ships were disabled.

When daylight came, it was found that what had been torpedoed by our boats the night before were two battleships—one of which was

the flagship of the enemy's squadron—and one cruiser. But our fleet, not being satisfied with this, attacked the enemy once more. The warships of the enemy were nothing fearful for our fleet, but the batteries on the hill, which continued to pour a hot fire upon our fleet, were very frightful. Our brave officers and seamen, however, fought very hard, untill four of the enemy's men-of-war were at last severely damaged by our balls. Our fleet, too, suffered some injuries, but they were very slight.

Thus our enemy has already sustained a signal defeat at sea. It is said that the warships, which were torpedoed or damaged by our fleet, have been crippled for any further immediate service, so that the supremacy at sea may be well said to have fallen into our hands. On land also, it will not be very long before we shall hear the soldiers, who are now staying here, will fight bravely in Manchuria and gain a glorious victory.

Thursday, March 17, 1904.

NOTE—After two years in a higher school. An average composition from this class. These men will do better work before the end of their four years with us. —P. A. S.

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